

Observations, Thoughts and Tidbits from Hong Kong

By Randy Witt, CGCS
Senior Superintendent of Courses
Hong Kong Golf Club

On June 27 we welcomed Mr. Sam Bauer, a native of Durand, Wisconsin, and a graduate of the University of Minnesota. Sam's position is the Equestrian Course Superintendent for the 2008 Olympics. As I've mentioned before, the Equestrian events for the Beijing Olympics will be taking place on parts of the golf courses of the Hong Kong Golf Club. The 17-kilometer track with 27 jump sites winds its way through all three golf courses. The summer of 2006 saw the construction of the track along with the 27 jump sites. The Summer of 2006 is time that all connected with the Hong Kong Golf Club will not soon forget. This period of time and the encompassing construction gave a whole new meaning to the words of chaos and upheaval. Everyday brought a new adventure, and not always pleasant. As part of the process leading up to the Olympics a test event will be held over a small section of the Equestrian Course on August 18th. The purpose of the Event is to see if the track is suitable, and if all other concerns relating to the event will run smoothly. Warm - up and cool-down areas, the veterinary staffs, media areas, security issues, concessions, etc. will go through a shake down during the test event. This will enable all concerned to make changes and adjustments within the next year in preparation of the actual event in August 2008.

Sam literally stepped off the plane, caught up on his sleep and was thrust into putting together a staff and getting the track prepared for the Test Event. Time change, a new culture, hot, humid weather, warm season grasses being grown on pure bunker sand, mole crickets the size of small frogs, a wild boar -- that's baptism under fire-on a slow day. I keep telling him to be patient, it will get busier and the weather will get hotter and wetter! Sam fortunately brought some wonderful, dry weather with him from Wisconsin, as we've had no rainfall in two weeks, which is very unusual for this time of the year. As the Olympics draws nearer, we'll be writing some articles and add some great photos of what the entire process entailed. In spite of the stresses and chaos, it has been an amazing experi-



ence to date. I look forward to the actual event itself next summer.

The recent problems with contaminated products being sent to the United States and other countries from China has been a source of major concern not only for the affected countries, but Red China itself. This has proven to be a great source of embarrassment for the government in Beijing. The government official that headed up the department for food and drugs in Beijing was convicted of taking bribes, which led to many of the problems. The official was jailed, had a quick trial, found guilty, sentenced to death, and quickly executed. End of story.

Just recently in the far northern reaches of China a massive network of child slavery was uncovered. A number of small companies was found to be using children as young as eight years old to work in the brick-producing factories of the region.

Throughout China the largest component in construction is brick and concrete. With all the construction being undertaken in Beijing in preparation for the Olympics, and many new construction projects undertaken with the large demand for upscale housing by the rapidly growing middle class, bricks are in great demand. Parents into slavery had either sold many of the children or the children had been kidnapped and sold. To date, the number of people found in slavery numbers in the thousands with the Red Chinese governments investigations continuing. Reality is that in a country with such a large influence on the world economy, slavery exists in large numbers.

A recent photo on the front page in the South China Morning News newspaper showed five convicted Chinese criminals

(Continued on Page 25)

An Adventure in Life—

(Continued from Page 24)

blindfolded and facing a government firing squad. Criminal acts and justice is handled quickly in China.

Punishable by Death

In many of the Asia countries there is little tolerance for crime and crime involving drugs. When flying to Singapore, I noticed that on my airplane ticket was printed the following notice: Drug Possession is Punishable by Death. That does get one's attention very quickly.

I recently had an experience that gave me an adrenalin rush for a couple of minutes. While on my normal early morning tour of the courses, I happened upon about a 6-foot long King Cobra snake. Rather than just try to slither away into the brush along side the cart path, it did an about face, stood up on its tail, and was preparing to challenge me. I reversed my cart as quickly as possible and did a hasty retreat.

By the time the adrenalin rush, or was it fear, subsided, I was too late in getting my camera out for a photo before the Cobra did finally move off into the vegetative undergrowth. This definitely provided me with a respect for venturing into heavily

"When flying to Singapore, I noticed that on my airplane ticket was printed the following notice: Drug Possession is Punishable by Death. That does get one's attention very quickly."

vegetative areas looking for an errant shot when playing golf.

It still amazes me to witness how much abuse some of the warm season grasses can tolerate and snap right back. Bermuda grass and Zoysia can be scalped severely and recover very quickly, especially in hot weather. Turf that I have seen scalped, it (the turf) was comprised of bent grass or Poa, would never recover. With warm season turf, add a little water

and heat and with a couple of days recovery is pretty well complete. Bermuda grass likes fertility. On our older varieties of Bermuda grass greens, 1 to 1 ft pounds of actual nitrogen per month per thousand square feet are normal for good, healthy growth. With our heavy rainfall amounts in the summer months, adequate Calcium levels in the soil are critical for good disease control. The two biggest pests we deal with: Mole Crickets and Leaf spot.

Macau, which is off the coast of Red China, can be reached from Hong Kong in a Hydro-boat in about 45 minutes. This is a wonderful place for a weekend trip. This gambling mecca has overtaken Las Vegas as the highest revenue producing location. It is amazing in that the island and area is very small, nothing at all on the scale of the largeness of Las Vegas. There are very few shows to be seen. For the non-gambler, there are extensive markets and a lot of history to be viewed and learned. The newly found rapidly growing Chinese middle class is gambling its dollars away at a vigorous

(Continued on Page 26)

SERVING THE GOLF INDUSTRY



GLENN REHBEIN COMPANIES, with over 45 years of experience, provides building, design and renovation services for Minnesota's elite golf courses. We focus on the details and pride ourselves on growing only top quality sod. Our comprehensive lines of Bluegrass, Blue-Fescue, Bentgrass and specialized Netlon Turf Systems will keep your course looking great all season long.

PROVIDING UNIQUE PRODUCTS & SERVICES

EXCAVATING | UNDERGROUND UTILITIES | ENGINEERING | SURVEYING
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION | TURF PRODUCTION | GOLF COURSES
ATHLETIC FIELDS | STORM WATER MANAGEMENT



8651 Naples Street N.E., Blaine, MN 55449
office: 763.784.0657 • www.rehbein.com

An Adventure in Life—

(Continued from Page 25)

pace. Many American gambling interests are investing and moving into the Macau market. Steve Wynn of Las Vegas fame just recently opened one of the largest casinos in the world in Macau.

Singapore is a very enjoyable location for a vacation. My perception was that Singapore would be a very dirty, crime-ridden city and country. I guess my perception came from seeing the city in movies, etc. I have found the city to be very modern, robust and growing, but expensive. Some of the golf courses are excellent and afford some great views of the Singapore harbors and the seaside. The weather is hot and sunny, the beaches white, the golf great, and the accommodations wonderful. There is plenty to see and do. For me, I was reminded of trips to Hawaii.

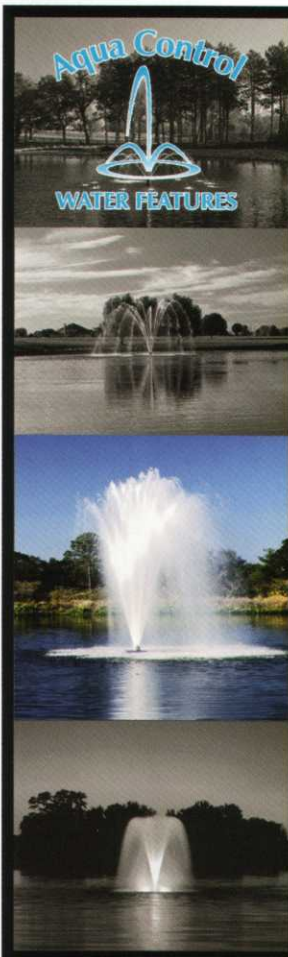
Next week the European Tour officials will be paying us a visit in preparation for this year's Hong Kong Open taking place here in late November. Sure seems hard to believe that it will soon be time to get ready for another Open. Preparing for the

Open last year was fun and the tournament itself was very satisfying. I have been fortunate to be able to be at a site that hosts a major tour event each year. One of the goals in my career was to be involved in some type of golf tour event.

Sports have always been a big part of my life and lifestyle. Even being in Hong Kong, I've still managed to stay involved and up-to-date through publications I receive, ESPN and the Internet. In the Asian countries soccer and rugby are the sports of choice and interest. Rugby is somewhat interesting, but soccer still doesn't hold my interest. Fortunately American football is around the corner and another season will soon be upon us. It is interesting to see how little is known about American football here.

For me, a life insight has been to see, understand and realize that the Chinese people have very little knowledge or care what is happening elsewhere in the world. Family, having food, clothes and shelter is their lot in life and sole focus of their daily living. As a culture or peoples, rulers and governments have always controlled the people's lives. This control and rule has created a culture of people that have a

very hard time in thinking or making decisions. A large part of the population, especially the older generations, appears to be almost robot like. It has been my observation that when something out of the ordinary occurs, a human freeze occurs. Nothing will happen or proceed forward until someone who has the ability to think or make a change steps forward to make a decision. Even when that occurs, there is a huge reluctance to change, as that isn't the way it has previously been handled or the process accomplished. This I view as the major stumbling block for this culture to move forward with any type of eventual real independence. The hope for the Chinese people really lies with the younger generations. The younger people are being strongly influenced and educated through the computer and the Internet age. This has and is enabling the younger people to realize and understand that thinking is good and that there are many different societies in the World. The future for independence, freedoms and eventually a form of democracy will come to being through the young Chinese.



Beauty.
Efficiency.
Display Aerators.

HYDROLogic
Turf Management Systems

800-422-1487 www.hydrologic.net